Archive Dayak
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The Iban Origin Legend,According to Ancient Mythology

While scientific data has suggested that the Iban are among the earliest ethnic groups in Southeast Asia (Simonson, 2011; Kee Boon Pin, 2014; K.C. Ang, 2013; Daren Curnoe, 2016), the Iban themselves preserve a rich oral tradition that recounts their ancestral origins through myth and legend.

According to Iban mythology, the Iban were the first people created by an ancient deity known as Gantallah, the supreme god. Their creation is believed to have taken place at the Batang Lupar River — regarded in myth as the first river on Earth — also known as Batang Ai, or the "mother of rivers". The term "Iban" itself originates from the Iban language, meaning "human", and specifically refers to the "first people" or urang menua/Asal of Borneo. (Sarawak gazette July 31,1958,Sutlive, Vinson H (1988).

In the Iban creation myth, the first humans were formed from tanah kumpok (sacred earth) and placed beneath a sacred woven cloth known as pua kumbu. As a result, the pua kumbu has since held a central place in Iban ritual life, symbolizing divine origin and sacred continuity (Jensen, 1974). This narrative bears striking resemblance to the biblical account of the first humans being created from earth.

The Iban also believe themselves to be descended from divine beings, including the warrior deity Sengalang Burong, who has greatly influenced Iban customs, spiritual beliefs, and cultural identity (LeBar, 1972).

These traditional beliefs and legends are not only important cultural narratives but also offer a unique indigenous perspective on human origins, identity, and sacred geography within the broader context of Southeast Asian ethnohistory.

References:

Jensen, Eric. The Iban and Their Religion. 1974.

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Jensen, Eric. The Iban and Their Religion. 1974.

LeBar, Frank M. Ethnic Groups of Insular Southeast Asia. 1972.

Antropos, Published 1906.

Simonson, 2011; Kee Boon Pin, 2014; K.C. Ang, 2013; Daren Curnoe, 2016.

Sarawak gazette July 31,1958

by Sutlive, Vinson H (1988)
The Iban of Sarawak : chronicle of a vanishing world

Reference:Antropos
Published date:1906

blood red and the wound being rubb
pirit thought would serve their purpos
hey tried to animate the red sapped tree, but it remained dumb
nd returned no answer.

Then the spirits turned to the earth and from the clay moul-
ed two human forms male and female. These they likewise
ccosted with a shout, and this time with succes, for the inanimate
orms immediateiy started into life and returned the greeting shout
f their creators. These two progenitors of the human race were
amed *Tanah Kumpok* which means „moulded earth".

The following is their tradition of the deluge.

The rice fields were yellow with crop and the Dyaks were
bout to take in the harvest when it was discovered that large
ortions of the fields had been despoiled during the night. The
oung men of the village searched about for the tracks of deer and
ild pig the common enemy of the farm, but in vain, no tracks
f either could be found. A council was held and it was decided
o lay in wait for the unknown enemy throughout the night.

As midnight approached the conceiled party beheld to their
orror an enormous python lower itself slowly down from the
tarlit sky, and commence to feed upon the ears of rice. The bravest
f the party then sprang from his ambush and with one terrible

desires of the gods are revealed to mortals—play large roles in the everyday life of Ibans. [Jensen 1966.]

Supernaturals. The Iban trace their descent to the god, Sengalang Burong, from whom much of the Iban adat is derived. He is manifested to men in the form of the Brahmany kite (a kind of hawk) and is mainly concerned with warfare and headhunting. There is a pantheonlike concept of lesser deities, related to Sengalang Burong, as well as a host of spirits, demons, and culture heroes—all of which figure in myths and stories. Animals and birds are not deified, but are identified with the gods in that the latter express themselves through the

and (particularly) om

dreams. The interactio

Reference:by LeBar, Frank .M (1972)
Ethnic groups of insular Southeast Asia
Topics Ethnology – Southeast Asia

Reference;Antropos
Published date:1906

7. As examples of their trad
counts of creation and of the delu

Their tradition of creati
expanse of waters over which floated the two creating spirits *Ar*
and *Irik* in the form of birds. Swooping down, these two spirit
took from the waters two solid substances of the shape and siz
of a fowls egg. From one of these Ara by his creative powe
formed the heavens, and from the other Irik formed the earth
On comparing their respective creations it was found that the ex
panse of earth extended far beyond the limits of the heavens; s
the two gods with mighty effort compressed the expanding eart
within the limit of its canopy the skies. Under the force of thi
compressure vast upheavals took place over the earths surfac
and thus the mountains and hills were formed from which aros
the rivers that water the valleys and plains.

As soon as the earth was created plants and trees sprang
spontaneously out of its surface. And now the two spirits seein
there was none to inhabit the earth set about the task of creatin
man. They first tried to form the human species from the tree
hat had sprung up out of the earth. They struck several tree
with a sharp instrument, and these from which a white sap ooze

Creation Myths

Accounts of the original creatio
mankind are confused, but these
significant. Various versions have
contact with the Iban. Horsburg
the last century mentions 'Rajah
'Raja Entala' of a version heard in
account is said to be from the Sk

Reference:
by Jensen, Erik, [1974]
The Iban and their religion
Oxford University

In the beginning, existed in solitude Rajah Gantallah, possessed of a soul with organs for hearing, speaking, and seeing; but destitute of any other limbs or members. . . . By an act of his will, Rajah Gantallah originated two birds, a male and a female, after which he did not directly produce any creature, his will taking effect through the instru-mentality of these birds. . . . They created first the sky, then the earth, and then Batang Lupar . . . which was the first of waters and the mother of rivers [see above, p. 18]. Finding that the size of the earth consider-ably exceeded that of the sky, they collected the earth together with their feet, and heaped it into mountains. Having completed this work they attempted to create mankind. For this end they made the trees and tried to turn them into men; but without success. They then made the rocks for the same purpose. These they shaped like a man in all respects; but the figure was destitute of the power of speech. They then took earth, and, by the aid of water moulded it into the form of a man, infusing into his veins the gum of the Kumpang-tree which is of a red colour. They called to him—he answered; they cut at him—blood flowed from his wounds; as the day waxed hot, sweat oozed through his skin. They gave him the name of Tannah [*sic*] Kumpok, or Moulded Earth.

"The Universe has as many different centers as there are living beings in it. Each of us is a center of the Universe. . . ." (Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*)

The purpose of this study is to analyze the world of the Iban as it has developed in the hills of Borneo, and the changes it has undergone as the Iban have moved into new settings.

The Iban have placed themselves squarely at the center of their universe, thus sharing a widespread human propensity for ethnocentrism. Each longhouse community has been a microcosm of the Iban world on which the sun, moon, and stars have been focused. The cosmology of the Iban has been Ptolemaic as other societies have orbited them and then been drawn within the sphere of Iban ideas and activities.

Predictably, Iban means "human" and the name-bearers are "proud of it" (McKinley, 1973). Equally to be expected, the Iban have considered members of other ethnic groups as less than human because of their differences. Such groups have existed to be brought within the domain of humanity, i.e., Ibanness, through the universe-extending activities of raiding and head-hunting. Myth and r
Iban whose unassa
turesome and optim

Reference:by Sutlive, Vinson H (1988) The Iban of Sarawak : chronicle of a vanishing world

derer, but it is only to be found meaning father, or mother-in-law, which does not seem to help. The Dayaks themselves say that Iban simply means a person and it is commonly used for "anyone" — "is anyone there?" So that "We Iban" means no more than our *people* or race. They were probably called Sea Dayaks because they use boats and were found in the 1840's in company with sea-going pirates out of the Batang Lupar and Saribas.

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with the names w
differences

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